

Fighters of the Total Force in the 21st Century

Should the force structure change?

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ABSTRACT

“Fighters in the ‘Total Force’ of the 21st Century – should the force structure change?

This paper examines the increased utilization of the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard in contingency operations, reasons for using the reserves, problems arising as a result of that use, and potential recommendations for countering those problems.

The national policy of “Engagement and Enlargement” resulted over the past decade in a three-fold increase in the number of deployments of US military personnel around the world. The increase is one often-cited reason for retention and recruiting problems in the active force, particularly among fighter units.

The Air Force turned to the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve for help. The increased tasking of the reserve component in-turn generated retention and recruiting problems in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve similar to those of the active duty component. Retention among fighter units in particular is a leading cause and indicator of poor retention and recruiting in the reserve component.

Recommendations in this paper provide suggested solutions to some retention and recruiting issues.

About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

“What is the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?”

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright¹

Air power is now the “weapon of choice” for the United States government when it uses force as an extension of policy. The pace of that use has increased dramatically over the past decade. The Air Force owns the preponderance of American air power and is tasked with supporting the growing number of interventions referred to as contingency operations. These interventions, or contingency operations, are military operations short of conventional war and increased in number following the end of the Cold War.² In fulfilling these contingency operations, the Air Force relies heavily on the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves. That reliance is for two primary reasons. First, there is a desire to increase public awareness and involvement in the political decisions that send forces abroad. By increasing the involvement of reserve component forces, more of the general public will become aware of and interested in the reason for intervention. The second reason is out of necessity – the active force cannot fulfill the current level of ³contingency taskings alone. In any event, the Reserve component of our Air Force will continue to be as heavily tasked as its active duty counterpart for the foreseeable future.

This paper briefly examines the history of the reserves, reviews the reasons for the increased reliance on the reserve component, explores problems created by that increased

¹ John T. Correll, “The Threshold of War,” Air Force Magazine, (February 2001), 2.

² RAND, “Costs and Benefits of Reserve Participation, New Evidence from the 1992 Reserve Component Survey,” MR-812-OSD (Washington DC, 1997) 1.

³ Eliot A. Cohen, “What’s Wrong With This Picture?” Foreign Affairs (December 2000), 40.

reliance, and makes recommendations for improvements where applicable. The national policy of “Engagement and Enlargement” resulted, over the past decade, in a three-fold increase in the number of deployments of US military personnel around the world. That increase is one often-cited reason for retention and recruiting problems in the active force, particularly among fighter units. For reasons outlined in this paper, the Air Force turned to the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve for help. The increased tasking of the reserve component in-turn generated retention and recruiting problems in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve similar to those of the active duty component. One major cause and leading indicator of retention and recruiting problems among both active duty and reserve components is retention among fighter units and a significant finding is that the force structure of the guard and reserves affects retention in key areas. Recommendations to increase retention among fighter units, including suggested changes to force structure provide solutions to many of the problems discussed.

This paper is limited in scope to how fighter aircraft forces of the Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve forces contribute to the primary task of fighting and winning war while fulfilling contingency intervention tasking. For the purposes of this paper, the terms “intervention,” “contingency operation,” and “contingency tasking” will be used interchangeably. All represent overseas, on foreign soil, use of military forces in pursuit of political policy goals. The terms “guard,” “reserves,” “militia,” and “reserve component” are also interchangeable. All refer to the militia of the United States as established in the Constitution now consisting of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. Those words represent the reserve forces designed to supplement active

duty military forces. The term “reservists” refers to all members of the reserve component, both national guard and reserves.

“OFF WE GO, INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER...”
The Air Force Song

During crises today, air power is easier to deploy than other military force. Politicians prefer air power, to the use of ground troops, because of the promise of likely success and early withdrawal without high risk. Air power provides the promise of lower casualties.⁴

Manpower is a crucial asset therefore military and civilian leaders strive to protect personnel. Air power offers that protection while offering an effective tool for intervention. Due to this, it may be safe to assume the US will continue to use air power for intervention often and extensively. It is therefore incumbent upon the Air Force to be prepared for these contingency operations as well as maintaining the capability to fight and win wars. Fundamental to success in these intervention missions is how the Air Force builds, equips, and trains its forces to best support the mission and how the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves contribute to that mission.

Today, contingency taskings keep the Air Force busy. Some argue the Air Force is over tasked to the point of causing serious retention and recruiting problems and efforts must be made to reduce these problems. In one such effort to reduce stress on the active force, the Expeditionary Air Force (EAF) concept was created.⁵ Air Force leaders transformed the Air Force to adapt to the new expeditionary nature of our tasking which includes multiple, simultaneous overseas contingency deployments. The primary goal of the EAF

⁴ Eliot A. Cohen, “What’s Wrong With This Picture?” Foreign Affairs (December 2000), 40.

is to maintain the bulk of US Air Force forces garrisoned in the United States and other key countries around the world while deploying them to hot spots as needed. As part of the EAF, the reserve component, including fighter units from the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves, are included in scheduled overseas contingency operations rotations mixed in with their active duty counterparts. Forces for each Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) - usually a wing-sized element known as an Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) – are drawn from almost all active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve units in the total Air Force.⁶ AEF's currently rotate on 90-day cycles into two ongoing contingency operations in Turkey and Saudi Arabia for Operations Northern and Southern Watch. Change of such magnitude as instituting the Expeditionary Air Force demonstrates the ability and desire of the Air Force to keep abreast of changes in world conflict and react by adjusting force structure and base alignment. Former Secretary of the Air Force, Whitten Peters believes “the service will not become less expeditionary. Indeed, the opposite is more than likely to be true.”⁷ Thus the process of rapidly adapting to changes in mission is beneficial. With an eye toward further contingency tasking, this paper will explore current fighter force structure, within both the active duty and reserve components, for potential change.

United States military forces, including the reserve component, are deployed in contingency operations now more than ever before during a period of extended peace. The dramatic increase in the use of the reserve component raises new questions and

⁵ John A. Tirpack, “The EAF Turns One,” Air Force Magazine, October 2000, 20.

⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁷ Peter Grier, “A Heads-up From Whit Peters, in Air Force Magazine, November, 2000, from web site, 6 November, 00: available at: <https://Ca.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/ebird>, 2.

issues. Is it right to deploy national guard and reserves in contingency operations? Are they not reserves only to be used in times of national crises? What problems will this increased use cause for traditional part-time reserve personnel and their civilian employers? Is the current overall fighter capability adequate to support the expected level of contingency operations? Are forces ready and adequate in size and structure to support simultaneous contingencies? Could changes to the overall Air Force fighter force structure, including the reserves, improve the capability to meet the increased demands of the nation? Should the relationship between the reserve component and the active duty change to accommodate contingency tasking and overseas deployments? If so, how?

“READY FOR WHAT?”⁸

“... deter aggression, resolve conflicts, prevent the spread of dangerous weapons, create financial stability, raise living standards, protect the environment, and promote Democracy and human rights abroad... The U.S. military plays a crucial role.”

The National Security Strategy of the United States⁹

The National Security Strategy of the United States makes it clear military force is a primary tool of political policy and military operations are no longer limited to conventional warfare. But what will the military be asked to do? There are many “missions” outlined in the National Security Strategy, everything from promoting democracy to deterring aggression. That means, at least for the foreseeable future, that the United States military must be prepared to successfully execute a wide variety of missions involving potential contingency operations as well as maintain the capability to win wars.

The Air Force supports contingency operations through a variety of mission areas, including significant airlift capability and forward deployed fighter force presence. Airlift and fighter forces are two critical components of air power projection and the EAF. To date, while airlift capability has been used in nearly every instance and contingency operation, fighter units are more focused in capability and therefore more restrictive in use due to the nature of the product they provide – destructive force. This paper examines the structure and composition of the fighter force for possible changes.

⁸ Ibid.,4.

⁹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, A National Security Strategy of the United States, (Washington DC, January 5th 2000), available at: http://www.infosec.com/internet/00/internet_013100b_j.shtml, 2.

Caution

"You see, we have been lucky that way, all of our wars have waited on us till we could get ready. But one day we may have one where the enemy won't wait! You think that's kidding? Well, you are just another senator if you do."

Will Rogers

It is often heard in political and military circles that the next war will be short. Virtually every conflict begins with similar anticipation, however those predictions are often wrong.¹⁰ The bloodiest wars of our nation's history were anticipated to be of short duration. The Civil War was supposed to be over in less than 90 days; World War I was going to be over before "we can get over there," and of course "The war in Vietnam was going to be so quick."¹¹ The technology of today leads one to believe the next war will be of short duration, but that thought is an echo of our past and there are no guarantees. For that reason, it remains imperative that the Air Force, including its reserve component, remain robust, well trained, and ready for all-out war of unexpected duration.

A discussion of size and structure of the force must begin with the projected tasks it will be asked to accomplish. The Air Force must be able, with its sister services, to fight and win the nation's wars and to support contingency operations whenever tasked – no matter what the duration. In the event predictions of a short war do not prove true, the Air Force must be prepared to fight on. That requires the availability to depend on a strong and ready reserve.

¹⁰ General Lawrence A. Skantze, USAF retired, "Democracy and Its Military," Armed Forces Journal, October, 2000, 40.

¹¹ WILL TV Channel 13 PBS, Champaign, IL, "Return With Honor" film, 13 November, 00 8 PM CT.

Former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said the reserves are “the initial and primary source for *augmentation* of the active forces in any further emergency requiring rapid and substantial expansion of active forces”¹² (emphasis added). The United States is risking the health of that primary source for augmentation by overusing the reserves in everyday contingency operations. The reserves are becoming interchangeable with our active forces today primarily due to the need to fulfill contingency taskings, but this is potentially causing a crisis in retention and recruitment. The Cable News Network (CNN) reports that the Air Force reserves failed to meet recruitment goals in each of the last three years and there is concern about recruitment in the future.¹³

Historically, the United States has paid a price to “catch up” with the military need – to build up and employ adequate forces – when war broke out. Often at the outbreak of hostilities, the US had to call upon a reserve or militia that was too small or too weakened by a lack of training to be immediately effective. In World War II, the total force was woefully behind the need for manpower and resources as it was thrust into war. In Korea, the US was again caught unprepared for war. The US military does not wish to repeat the mistakes of the past; therefore it developed a successful program of integrating reserves into the total force. However, now overuse of the reserve force for intervention threatens to degrade the capability of the reserve component as much as the neglect of the past.

¹² Colonel Mark P. Meyer, ANG, “The National Guard Citizen-Soldier, (Air War College Paper, Maxwell AFB, Al. October 1996), 22.

¹³ CNN web site, “U.S. Faces Challenge Recruiting Reservists,” September 12, 2000, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2000/US/09/11/us.reservists/>, last accessed 5 March, 2001.

There is concern that demanding too much from reservists will cause increased retention problems.¹⁴ Contingency deployments often require additional preparation prior to deployment involving many additional work hours on the part of reservists. That extra work time is causing problems for the reserves and will be discussed later. The important point to remember is that as retention falls, the time required to train replacements increases. Training of new troops – particularly in specialized duties within the Air Force - takes time. That time may not be available. Therefore, a wiser course of action may be to conserve that primary source of augmentation, the reserve component, rather than jeopardize its effectiveness through low retention and recruitment.

¹⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Lucas, ANG and Lieutenant Colonel Stuart C. Johnson, USAF, “Air National Guard Fighters in the Total Force,” (Air War College Paper, Maxwell AFB, Al. 1995), 1. available at: <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/ct/maxpap.html>, last accessed 5 March, 2001.

WHY USE THE GUARD AND RESERVES

“Politically, the greatest therapeutic benefit of a citizen army would be the large-scale reengagement of taxpaying citizens in issues of national defense and security.”

Former Senator Gary Hart¹⁵

“The shortage of trained active-duty aircrews and the current operations tempo have increased the Air Force's reliance on the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve to help accomplish the mission.”

Air Force News¹⁶

Recently, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves are increasingly tasked to support deployments of American military power abroad in times other than war. Over the past decade the reserves, as a fully integrated part of total US forces, have become essential tools of foreign policy. In fact, the US is at the point today where reserve component involvement is necessary for even small mobilizations.¹⁷ There are two primary reasons for the increased reliance on the reserve component: 1) there is a strong desire to increase public awareness of, and involvement in, political debate concerning military use in interventions, and 2) they are sorely needed. Active duty forces today cannot sustain current worldwide commitments for contingency operations without the participation of the reserve component.

When President Johnson refused to call up reserves for the war in Vietnam, it was in part to avoid public debate of the war.¹⁸ When mounting casualties and increasingly negative press eventually brought the debate to the forefront of American politics, the tone was

¹⁵ Gary Hart, The Minuteman (New York, The Free Press, 1998), 71.

¹⁶ Staff Sergeant A. J. Bosker, “Guard, Reserve Help Overcome Shortage, Transition to EAF,” AF Print news, 19 April, 2000, available at: http://www.af.mil/news/Apr2000/n20000419_000593.html, last accessed 5 March, 2001.

¹⁷ Meyer, 16.

distinctly anti-military as well as anti-policy. In response, several years after Vietnam the military developed the “Total Force Policy.”¹⁹ That policy simply put, was meant to insure when the United States goes to war, it must use the reserves. Heavy use of the reserves, from all parts of America, is intended to involve the general public in the debate concerning use of the military.²⁰

Because of the shrinking military population and the reduction in the number of active duty installations inside the United States, fewer people have direct contact with military service members. This situation poses the risk of having the all-volunteer force isolated from the general population, or worse, alienated. The reserve component plays an increasingly significant role in assuring a better understanding of the need for military forces and developing support for military members within the states and communities.²¹ This logic says the more the reservists are used, the more the general population will know about and discuss the contingency and the legitimacy of sending in American troops overseas in support of that, and other, contingencies.

¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 20-21.

²¹ Ibid., 29. From a Department of Defense special task force as outlined in Colonel Meyer’s paper.

History of the militia

“That the people have a right to keep and bear arms; that a well-regulated militia, composed of the body of the people trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state; that standing armies, in time of peace, are dangerous to liberty, and therefore ought to be avoided, as far as the circumstances and protection of the community will admit; and that, in all cases, the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power.”

Proposed second amendment to the United States Constitution
(of which only part was adopted)²²

To better understand the desire for dependence upon the reserve component, a review of the history of the militia in America is warranted. The founding fathers sought to insure the military would remain strictly under the control of civilian leaders and kept at a minimal size during peacetime. Their idealized form of warfare included citizen soldiers taking up arms only in times of crises and only at the behest of the people. These citizen-soldiers would retain civilian values, bring new ideas and ingenuity to the military, and readily return to civilian life once the crises had passed.²³ When needed to assist a small regular army, additional forces were to come from the militia. “*When needed*” was intended to be only on limited occasions, and only in times of crises. Under normal circumstances the militia were not to be used for other missions. By design the founding fathers wanted the regular military to remain small in size. They were concerned a large army might invite “adventurism” - attempting to increase power by attacking other nations.²⁴²⁵ A small, full-time army forced the new government to depend on a *militia* in times of crises, thereby limiting military action.

²² Hart, 108.

²³ Meyer, 8.

²⁴ RAND, Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, (Washington DC, 1999), 17, MR-1091-AF.

²⁵ Hart, 102-107.

Civilian control of the military also kept army affairs from becoming exclusively “army issues,” ignoring the will of the people. It was thought a large standing army could take on a life of its own and become a potential threat to democracy. A large army under a tyrannical military leader might be tempted to overthrow the government and seize control. The drafters of the Constitution saw the militia as an armed counter-force to protect the population against the possibility of a run-amok standing army: hence the second amendment and the right to keep and bear arms. Additionally, having to depend on the militia was seen as a method to ensure civilian control would remain preeminent over the military. The military would not be strong enough to “go it alone.” The political reality of each crisis would force citizens and political leaders alike to evaluate the policy and reach a consensus on the course to be taken.²⁶ Those concerns were based on contemporary Europe of the founding fathers’ immediate history, and with the notable exception of concern of military coup, remain valid in the United States today. In any event, public involvement in the politics of military use remains desirable.

²⁶ Ibid., 104-107.

The Public Debate

“No public policy issue is more controversial than the use of military force.”
Richard N. Haass²⁷

The theory remains that for a democratic government to act responsibly there must be consistency between the will of the people and the nation’s policy. Use of the guard and reserves, as previously discussed, is one way to increase the public debate over military intervention. However, one could argue that will of the people – the national debate – has less direct impact on US foreign policy today. How is this so? The Constitution gave sole powers to the Congress to provide for the common defense and to organize the militia, the principle being that many voices should be involved in the decision to use military force rather than just one voice, even that of a President.²⁸ In the Constitution, Congress was given the sole power to raise armies and declare war. Only in the twentieth century did the President gain more control over the decision to employ military forces without the consent of Congress. Statute now gives the President the power to activate up to 200,000 reservists for up to 270 days without approval of Congress.²⁹ Congress retains approval for continuing operations via continued funding, the power of the purse, but congressional approval is not required prior to committing US military force. The change to statute was intended to give the President immediate access to military forces for emergency and crisis situations. An unintended consequence has left Congress, and thus the many voices of the people, out of the initial decision-making process.

²⁷ Richard N. Haass, Intervention, The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World, (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution press, 1999) 1.

²⁸ Constitution, art. I sec. 8.

²⁹ RAND, Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, 41.

Under the Total Force Policy developed after Vietnam, a call-up of the reserves became essential if the US was to sustain forces in anything more than a limited contingency, or so the theory goes. The Total Force Policy was intended to “guarantee” that military action overseas would require use of reserves from many separate communities in the United States and would become a political impossibility without the consent of the people. Presidents were supposed to be less able to commit forces to military action without a political consensus that included extensive national debate.³⁰ However, this does not appear to be the case today. The theory predicting extensive national debate over deployment of US military force has not developed into reality under the previous Bush and Clinton administrations, or in fact, anytime since Vietnam. Somalia, Panama, post Desert Storm Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo are all contingency interventions within the last 12 years where the initial deployment decision neither involved significant public debate nor drew significant media attention or criticism. To be fair, Somalia and to a lesser extent Panama drew attention, but only after things failed to go as planned.³¹

The Total Force Policy intended to increase the possibility that civilians would be acquainted with someone serving in the militia who was in the theater of war, possibly someone wounded or killed, and thus take more of an interest in the policy of intervention. However, probably due to the limited number of casualties and because the

³⁰ Grant T. Hammond, “No more Vietnam's: Force Structure The Reserve Components and Desert Storm,” (a prepared paper for presentation to the annual meeting of the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations In Washington, DC, June 22, 1991), 1.

³¹ Thomas E. Ricks, “Containing Iraq: A Forgotten War; As U.S. Tactics are Softened, Questions About Mission Arise,” The Washington Post, October 25th, 2000, A01, 1. available at: <http://www.newslibrary.com/nlsearch.asp>, last accessed November 28, 2000.

force is completely made up of volunteers, there seems to be little, if any, interest on the part of the American public.

The Clinton administration's National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement states "the United States cannot long sustain a fight without the support of the people."³² Without the interest of the media, most Americans aren't aware of the sustained fight and therefore do not discuss or debate the issue.

As an example, the United States has been flying military aircraft over northern and southern Iraq for ten years. According to one critic, these operations are typical examples of military missions the US is involved in: "small in scale, open-ended, with undefined objectives, and *largely ignored* by the American people" (emphasis added).³³ The average American citizen is not aware of these operations or the threat to coalition aircraft while conducting them. The fact that aircraft are engaged regularly by Iraqi anti-aircraft-artillery remains largely unreported in the American press. If an aircraft were lost over Iraq, there would likely be a dramatic increase in media coverage, which might force a review of the policy involved. For now, the public debate remains minimal.

The operations in Somalia support this view. The initial decision to deploy American military personnel in Somalia went largely unchallenged and unnoticed among the general populace, but when 18 US military personnel were killed in action, subsequent media coverage and resultant public awareness influenced the administration's decision

³² The White House, National Security Strategy, 1.

³³ Ricks, The Washington Post, 1.

to change the mission and withdraw US troops. That was significantly well into the contingency deployment and was little more than a graceful exit.³⁴

The first reason behind the increased use of the guard and reserves, to require public debate on the issue of each intervention, has had minimal, if any, effect on the initial decisions to deploy American military forces. The debate seems to have impact only if and when something goes wrong. When the media does not debate the issue, there is little chance the American public will. As long as US forces succeed in keeping casualties to the successfully low level of the past decade, it is doubtful a public debate will cause a political problem for the President.

The second reason for using the guard and reserves today is necessity.³⁵ There is an international trend of involvement in small conflicts around the world. A reduced-sized military does not match the requirements to support that trend. In order to complete the tasks given, the military increasingly turned to the guard and reserves for help. This is nowhere more true than in the Air Force.³⁶ Today, the Air Force relies heavily on the Air National Guard and Reserves to complete nearly every mission.

This need to rely heavily on the reserve component stems from the abundance of military operations in today's environment, the drawdown of the active force, and the retention and recruiting problems in the active force. The guard and reserves contain 35 percent of

³⁴ Haass, 46.

³⁵ Jack Kelley, "U.S. Reliance on guards, Reservists Escalating, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette National Bureau, October 28, 2000, 1 can be located at: http://www.newslibrary.com/region_pgs/pa_search.htm, last accessed on October 31, 2000.

the fighter force structure of the Air Force.³⁷ The current level of tasking is overwhelming active duty fighter forces, therefore it is natural to attempt to use all the resources available. With the advent of the EAF, participation by the reserves is even more critical. In fact, USAF Chief of Staff, General Michael Ryan acknowledged the reserves have become a key component to AEF success.³⁸ Herein lies the catch 22.

The current level of contingency tasking has stressed the active force. Some say the active force was spread too thin and worked too hard to sustain the current operations tempo (optempo) without relief. Over the past twelve years, the overall size of the Air Force was reduced by 40 percent but deployments have increased 300 to 400 percent.³⁹ One result is a retention problem for the active duty Air Force, particularly among crew chiefs and pilots of heavily tasked units. The retention problem developed into a recruiting problem as dissatisfied and “disgruntled former employees” returned to cities and towns across America and spread the word that the Air Force was not the place to be. That’s the catch 22. The increased workload causes lower retention which in turn causes recruiting difficulties.

The Air Force recognizes these problems and significant initiatives have been developed to increase both recruiting and retention. The first initiative was the highly successful

³⁶ Hart, 163.

³⁷ Cohen, 1.

³⁸ Major Thomas H. Hueg, USAF, “Tactical Airlift Operations Within the Expeditionary Aerospace Force, Impact on the Air Force Reserve,” (Air Command and Staff College Paper, Maxwell AFB, Al. 1999), V. available at: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/database/research/ay1999/acsc/99-089.htm>, last accessed March 7, 2001.

³⁹ CNN, “U.S. Faces Challenge Recruiting Reservists,” 1.

AEF concept, which provided much needed relief to those wings previously carrying a disproportionate share of the contingency tasking.

Another successful initiative to reduce stress on the active duty was to turn to the guard and reserves for assistance. The guard and reserves were asked to help support AEFs on a volunteer basis. The reserve component was asked to fill 90-day commitments with two-week annual training requirements and volunteers to relieve active-duty units in ongoing contingency operations. They committed to a series of individual 15-day deployments, door-to-door, that may be extended depending on volunteerism. Thus a particular reserve component unit could cover a 90-day period by sharing the tasking among its own members.⁴⁰

Reserve component units participating in extended contingency operations have helped relieve heavily tasked active duty units. Guard and reserve airlift and tanker units for example, now supply about 44 percent of tactical airlift and about 30 percent of the tankers to AEF deployments.⁴¹ Using the guard and reserve to relieve tasking is a successful initiative where airlift and tankers are concerned. However, the same level of success is not matched in fighter units. That will be discussed below.

⁴⁰ Hueg, 24.

⁴¹ Tirpack, 25.

ACTIVE DUTY RETENTION - THE CATCH 22

“Today in the Air Force, we still have broken career fields ranging from security forces, to crew chiefs, to public affairs and pilots.”

Former Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters.⁴²

The stress on the active force developed from the unprecedeted peacetime use of the last decade and manifested itself in retention and recruiting problems inside the force. Those retention and recruiting problems then migrated to the reserve component when the reserves were tasked to support the active force during contingency operations. The causes of low active duty retention lead to poor active duty recruiting. Active duty retention and recruiting problems cause increased need to use the guard and reserves so extensively today. Using the guard and reserve so extensively is causing retention problems in the guard and reserves similar to those in the active force. Poor retention in the guard and reserves contributes to poor recruiting, etc. The spiral is escalating downward. Dissatisfied “former employees” of the Air Force – active duty or reserve component - become negative recruiters back in their hometowns. The key to this catch 22 is active duty retention. Low retention leads to recruiting difficulties. Both cause active duty members more work and more work contributes to low retention.

⁴² Grier, Air Force Magazine, 30.

Extensive temporary duties are often cited as one major irritant that leads personnel to leave active duty, and now to leave the reserve component as well. High operations tempo, particularly contingency deployments to the desert, is unpleasant and tends to alienate military members. More importantly perhaps these deployments tend to alienate families, causing stress in the relationship, which further leads to a decision to leave military duty. High optempo is frequently cited along with other causes for retention problems, but there is another issue less discussed which is a source of poor retention for active duty pilots. For the purpose of this paper, the remaining discussion is restricted to those issues most concerning fighter pilots and crew chiefs.

Fighters

Prior to June 1966 over 50 percent of the fighter pilots (in Vietnam) had over 2000 hours, 510 UE, (in Unit Equipped aircraft – the particularly aircraft they were flying) and our kill ratio was 3 to 1. By June 1968, UE time was 240 hours and the kill ratio was .85 to 1. (.85 to 1 means the US was losing more fighters in air-to-air combat than it was shooting down.)

Vietnam Air-to-Air Statistics: ⁴³

What motivates fighter pilots? Is that motivation so different from others that it warrants different treatment? Why does a fighter pilot enter the Air Force? Why does he (or she) stay? Why does he leave? Why does he want to fly a fighter? For most fighter pilots there is one motivation above all others.

The majority of fighter pilots are in the Air Force, both active and reserve, because they want to fly *fighters* (as opposed to any other aircraft).⁴⁴ Their motivation is the jet itself. It is not to make money. It is not to see the world. It is typically not because they want to become general officers though some do want to become leaders. For most it is the flying - flying *fighters* - something unique, sleek, fast, powerful, and beautiful. Pilots who truly want to fly fighters, want only that – to fly fighters. When asked to take an assignment doing just about anything else, without the promise of a fighter on the other side, they usually turn it down.

⁴³ From an e-mail file of aviation quotes circulated on the Internet. The point is that when experience levels dropped, so did the kill ratio, which means American losses went up.

⁴⁴ The author has been an F-16 pilot for 19 years including a tour as squadron commander of an F-16 squadron from 1998-2000. As commander, he conducted interviews with every pilot and crew chief that left active duty from that squadron. Additionally, the author has extensive contacts with many officers who have left active service and now fly F-16s in the guard and reserves and has conducted many informal as

This paper focuses on the fighter force because it is a key component in the Air Force today. Other specialties are just as stressed and just as important as fighters and, while general principles are the same, this paper focuses on fighters both for simplicity and due to the author's familiarity with them. Issues addressed may be directly applicable to other career specialties within the Air Force.

According to former Secretary of the Air Force, F. Whitten Peters, three key issues face Air Force leaders today. First is poor retention of skilled enlisted personnel – by that he is referring to fighter crew chiefs as well as many other specialties. Second is declining mission capable rates of an aging aircraft fleet. Third is an unprecedented critical shortage of qualified pilots.⁴⁵ Declining mission capable rates are related to lower experience levels among crew chiefs, aging equipment, and spare parts supplies, all of which affect the decision of those same crew chiefs to remain on active duty. This area is being worked aggressively by Air Force leadership and is not within the scope of this discussion; however, pilots and crew chiefs leave the Air Force for other reasons, which will be discussed.

The United States Air Force is facing the largest peacetime pilot shortage in its history. Half of this pilot shortfall occurs in fighters where the pilot shortage is approaching 20 percent of requirements.⁴⁶ Among the widely accepted and most cited primary causes, two apparently seem the most critical: (1) airline employment opportunities are excellent and (2) the high tempos of contingency operations and remote overseas assignments

well as formal interviews over those 19 years. This is the majority opinion of pilots who have left active duty in the last ten years based on those interviews and the author's personal experience.

⁴⁵ Grier, Air Force Magazine, 30.

degrade the quality of life to a point where many decide to leave.⁴⁷ One other significant reason active duty pilots leave the active force should be discussed. For the past decade, life in the reserve component has been overwhelmingly more attractive for fighter pilots than life in the active force. It truly has been a case of the grass being greener on the other side of an active versus reserve fence. As will be discussed, there are many advantages to being in the reserves over active duty for one who wishes to fly fighters.

For insight into the retention problem inside fighter units, both active and reserve, one should examine both cultures. The two cultures are very different. Insight into those differences will help explain why reserve duty appears more attractive. Active duty fighter pilots work long hours and spend much time away from home. Normally, they do so willingly – as long as they get to keep flying fighters. The culture of the reserve component is different. Guard and reserve pilots, for the most part, are part-timers. (Full-time culture is similar to that of the active duty.) Part-timers usually have another full time civilian job. Quite often that is an airline-flying job. The airlines provide excellent pay with ample free time, allowing pilots to “work” at their guard job more than someone with a conventional 40 hour a week civilian job. This free time permits the part-time guard pilot/full-time airline pilot to reach military retirement eligibility nearly simultaneously with his or her counterpart who remains on active duty. (Though retired, reserve component officers do not begin to draw retired pay until age 60). It also permits the reserve component pilot to remain flying fighters until retirement with no interruptions for other types of assignments. The reserve component pilot is not required

⁴⁶ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, A Crisis for Operational Units, (Arlington VA, 2000), iii and 4, ISBN-0-8330-2857-X.

to uproot his family and move every two to three years. This is important to spouses who work and to children in school. Perhaps the most significant difference in cultures is that guard pilots basically only show up at the squadron to fly. They are paid based on time at the unit and they have minimum flight requirements that fill the available time. Therefore typically, full-timers or active duty members perform the extra duties that must be performed in a fighter squadron, while some reservists literally only fly. Thus, a reserve component pilot's career can last as long as he likes, and he or she will remain in one location and in their aircraft for the duration with very little to do other than fly.⁴⁸ Active duty pilots on the other hand, learn very early in their career that much more is required of them. They will be asked to relocate on average every three years. Children will change schools, sometimes in the middle of the school year, and spouses will change jobs equally as often. Generally, reimbursement funds do not adequately cover expenses during those frequent moves and the pilot and spouse have little input as to where that next assignment will take them.⁴⁹

A typical career for an active duty fighter pilot begins with his or her first assignment: a one-year remote tour in Korea or approximately three years at a base in the states, Europe, or Japan.⁵⁰ Currently, each tour (except Korea) will likely include at least two, more likely three, contingency deployments to Saudi Arabia or Turkey for a minimum of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Gary Harris, ANG, multiple interviews by author, May – November, 2000, Atlanta Ga., and via internet e-mail; Lieutenant Colonel Tom Heemstra, ANG, multiple interviews by author, January - March, 2001 via telephone and internet e-mail; and Lieutenant Colonel J. D. Williams, ANG, interview by author, March 2001, via internet e-mail. All three of these officers were prior active duty F-16 pilots who transferred to the reserve component and went on to be squadron and group commanders.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

90 days each in three-years.⁵¹ Most of the pilots will not upgrade to flight leader before completion of their first tour because they have spent so much time away from home they did not have the opportunity to upgrade. Flight leadership is an important and prestigious advancement in the pilot career field. It normally takes two to three years to upgrade depending on type aircraft and mission.

At about the three-year point in a stateside assignment, the pilot will probably move to Kunsan, Korea for the remote tour. If overseas other than Korea, the pilot will return to the states after three years, probably to another F-16 assignment though some will be assigned to other duties discussed below.

If the first assignment was to Korea, upon completion of that year the pilot will be assigned stateside in the same aircraft. Korean assignments are usually only for one year (see below). If Korea was the second operational assignment, the pilot will probably be reassigned other duties upon returning to the states. After the second operational flying assignment, most pilots can expect to be reassigned to duties outside of their primary aircraft, possibly to teach at Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT), to pilot an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), or to become an Air Liaison Officer (ALO) temporarily attached to the Army.⁵²

⁵⁰ Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) Briefing, “Fighter Assignments Force Update” Jan 01 version, provided by Major Hank Reed, AFPC Randolph AFB, Tx, slide number 49.

⁵¹ Based on author’s personal experience as a squadron commander at Shaw. This was typical of pilots assigned to Shaw AFB, SC from 1998-2000.

⁵² AFPC, 40-46.

These types of tours are known as “Alpha” tours – not in your primary weapon system. After a remote tour many pilots face an alpha tour. Upon returning from an alpha tour, many pilots face a remote tour as the price to get back in their fighter. An F-16 pilot can expect about two of these alpha tours in a twenty-year career along with at least one non-flying staff duty assignment.⁵³ That can add up to as much as nine years outside of their primary weapon system in 20 years.

The one-year tour to Korea is known as a “remote” tour – which means one is assigned there without family members. This is a major frustration for many in the military, particularly in the F-16 community.⁵⁴ Former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, recognizes the problem of family separations caused specifically by assignments to Korea as critical. While not offering specific solutions, he does recognize something must be done soon.⁵⁵ The problem is much talked about in F-16 units. (The A-10 is the only other aircraft currently with a remote tour. That is one squadron in Osan, Korea where many members can be accompanied.) Many members complain bitterly when, after a two and a half year tour in the states that includes two or three 90-day trips to the desert, they are reassigned a remote tour to Korea. Most pilots and their families feel the high optempo associated with contingency operations can be dealt with, especially now that the AEF concept is in place, but many question the need for a full year of family separation in Korea.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, Preventive Defense, (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution press, 1999), 213-214.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

A remote assignment is a significant stress on family life. Many pilots and crew chiefs alike have turned this assignment down and left active duty rather than endure the additional separation. Many personnel, upon returning to the states after their tour in Korea, return to a base like Shaw only to reenter the desert contingency rotation schedule.⁵⁶ Separations and remote tours are particularly difficult for young F-16 crew chiefs. Many of these young people are just starting out in life, some with a new wife or child, or boyfriends or girlfriends they must leave behind. Korea does not offer much social life for younger personnel. Many crew chiefs try to cross-train into another aircraft such as the F-15E, which has no remote tours, but are denied and end up leaving the Air Force rather than accept the remote tour.

In the F-16 community there is a perception that one gets more than a fair share of remote and alpha tours. In August 1998, members of an Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) class at Vance AFB were about to state their preference of aircraft for the future. The pilots were interviewed as to reasons for making their choices. Most of the young pilots wanted to fly fighters but they did not want the F-16. When asked why, they stated their spouses did not like the separation aspect of Korean assignments and they greatly influenced the pilot preferences. At a dinner with the pilots and wives, the wives unanimously stated they did not like the F-16 because of the potential family separation associated with an assignment to Korea. All were very well educated on the requirements for the remote tours in the F-16 and did not want their husbands gone for a year at a time. They were not, however, concerned about 90-day increments to the desert. They

⁵⁶ AFPC briefing and author's personal experience.

understood that the only remote fighter flying assignments in the Air Force right now are three F-16 and one A-10 squadrons in Korea.⁵⁷

The remote requirements in Korea cause another irritant for personnel. Members complain they move too often. The rapidity with which personnel inside the F-16 community are forced to move is caused by the remote assignment needs in Korea. The assignments in Korea must remain filled yet each must change personnel every twelve months. This is directly responsible for much of the movement within the fighter community in the active force. For the time being, a solution to the Korea family separation problem seems to be difficult to determine. Later in this paper, specific recommendations for easing and sharing the burden of separations and remote tours in Korea will be discussed.

Another issue for active duty fighter personnel with relation to the reserve component is the perception that the guard and reserves are more important than the active duty. (In relation to human motivation, if one feels somehow less important, one will tend to move to another environment where the feeling of importance improves.) For example, when active units deploy to Southern Watch, they deploy for 90 days. While deployed there they see multiple guard units and personnel rotate in and out of theater at a rapid rate. Morale among active units can suffer when they have been deployed for more than 70 days and see a unit leaving for home that arrived only two weeks before. In one particular instance an active duty unit was delayed departing theater after 90 days in order to wait three additional days so the airlift could return the guard personnel at the same

⁵⁷ UPT pilot class, August 1998, author personal interview.

time.⁵⁸ The active duty personnel had to extend three days to wait for a guard unit to reach 14 days. Most personnel understand airlift is expensive, but nonetheless they felt slighted that they had to accommodate the guard unit and not vice versa.

A perceived inequity for many active pilots concerns what are considered desirable assignments. Active duty pilots and crew chiefs look forward to a break in their career. That break usually comes in the form of an assignment outside of operational flying, normally to Luke AFB (this is an F-16 flying assignment). Other exceptionally desirable assignments include Nellis AFB, Nevada and Tyndall AFB, Florida. In an effort to "free up active duty pilots for contingency and operational assignments" reserve pilots have been assigned to Luke to replace active pilots. Additionally, some reservists now occupy operational test positions at Tyndall and the highly coveted aggressor pilot positions at Nellis. Active duty pilots see these opportunities disappear and feel there is no longer a "good deal" break for them. Reservists now fill some of the "aggressor" and operational test pilot assignments, yet active duty pilots returning from a remote tour in Korea are being assigned to a two-year non-flying job with the Army. This has a decidedly negative affect on active duty pilot retention particularly if one remembers what these officers want most is to fly fighters. When the Air Force limits their fighter assignments, it pushes them toward the door. Or more accurately, until the increase in reserve component tasking, it pushed them into the guard.

⁵⁸ This is based on author's personal first-hand knowledge of the 55th Fighter Squadron deployment to Kuwait, Jan-Apr 99. Airlift was available for departure at 92-day point but delayed for three days in order to return members of the Connecticut ANG to the states.

Here is the heart of the matter. Many active duty pilots believe the grass is greener in the reserves. They know if they go to the guard or reserves, they will never again have to give up flying their fighter to go to an alpha tour, and they will never have to accept a remote assignment. These are college educated, intelligent, motivated officers. Their motivation is to fly fighters. Until now, they were able to fly fighters in the guard, command large salaries and have most of the good deals with very little of the bad. Until now, the guard and reserves were significantly more attractive than life on active duty. Arguably it still is, only now they have to go to the desert, too (albeit for only 14 days per year).

They can have their cake and eat it too

"For fighter pilots, going to war is the crux of our business."

General Robert D. Russ, USAF, former Commander of Tactical Air Command

The issue of how attractive the reserve component appears to be for fighter pilots is completely forgotten when searching for ways to increase retention. A significant reason fighter pilots leave active duty is that they can have many of the positive benefits of being on active duty while not having to deal with many of the negative aspects when they transfer to the reserve component. They get to fly fighters and get that six-figure airline job at the same time. They can fly a fighter until retirement age, with no alpha or remote tours. They get to fly a fighter and never have to move. Their children can attend the same school in the same town for the remainder of their education. They will not have to spend 90 days per year in a desert unless they choose to. If they want to go for more than two weeks, they can volunteer. The part-timers will not have to perform tedious ancillary duties so prevalent in an active duty fighter squadron. In short, they get many good, positive aspects of a fighter pilot's life and very little bad. Most can get an airline job earning mega-bucks until retirement, but they will have to wait until age 60 to begin drawing military retirement. Most are willing to trade 20 years of the military retirement check for the six-figure airline income for those twenty years and the six-figure retirement it offers.

All fighter pilots want to go to a war if there is one. It is their nature. Going to war is like going to the super bowl. Everyone wants to be in the big game. Today however, among active duty pilots, there is a perception that one's odds of going to war are equal or better in the guard. Guard pilots don't have periodic assignments to non-flying jobs, alpha tour

flying jobs, or remote tours to Korea (each of which is likely to keep an active duty pilot out of a war, assuming Korea remains stable as it has for the past 48 years). If all one wants to do is fly fighters and get into combat if an opportunity ever comes up, better to be in the guard than on active duty.

The bottom line is that since Vietnam, when the reserves possessed outdated equipment and were never likely to be called to active duty, the Air Force has swung the pendulum to the other extreme making guard and reserve duty overwhelmingly more attractive to pilots than the life of active duty. It is time to center the pendulum by making it more attractive to remain on active duty.

So, the question isn't why do some pilots leave, the question is why aren't they *all* leaving? Let's turn the question around. Let's not ask why pilots leave, let's ask, "why do pilots stay on active duty?" Certainly we have demonstrated they don't stay for the money or family life. Some stay for the retirement, which is attractive (unless Congress changes it again), however most understand the airlines offer a better retirement plan. Then why do they stay? Some may stay to try to command a fighter squadron, but again the odds are equal or better in the guard these days. (Many of this author's contemporaries command now or have commanded fighter squadrons and groups in the guard thus it appears the odds are just as good in the guard as on active duty.) Those that remain on active duty do so for some other reason.

Many pilots remain on active duty to “try to make a difference,” to sacrifice for their country. The fact is, many pilots “want” to be here. The problem is, the active duty often makes it difficult to stay. For many reasons, particularly for the reason stated above, active duty retention has become a critical issue.⁵⁹ This is a challenge to one’s motivation to put up with the sacrifices called for to remain on active duty. Why should one stay in the active component and put up with the sacrifices when one can join the guard and have it all? The Air Force should make an effort to improve active duty service for those that want to stay.

With the increased utilization of the reserve component recently, both the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves are experiencing retention and recruiting issues similar to those in the active force. This has made reserve component service less attractive, relative to what it was just a few years ago. However the reserve component remains, in the eyes of many active duty pilots, a more attractive alternative because of the reasons stated above. Near the end of this paper are recommendations to change the current circumstances for both the active and reserve components.

⁵⁹ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 5.

CRITICS OF THE GUARD AND RESERVES

“Of all the services, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve represent the most successful integration of regulars and reservists.”

Senator Gary Hart⁶⁰

This new and extensive mission for the guard and reserves is not without critics.

Criticisms of the militia started in the colonial period with accusations of inadequate training and poor leadership (relative to a professional army). The founding fathers purposely crafted this compromise between military effectiveness and civilian political control accepting that militia forces would not be as well funded, as well trained, or as immediately ready for action as active forces. Accepting civilian political control of the militia meant it was commanded and run by non-career soldiers. This was perceived to lead to a higher initial casualty rate in war but would guarantee civilian control. Today’s criticisms are essentially the same: a lack of readiness due to inadequate training, poor officer leadership and a lack of availability on short notice (by design making it difficult to use the militia except in times of crisis).⁶¹ These criticisms have some merit.⁶²

There traditionally remains some trade-off between training, readiness, and leadership of the reserves as the founding fathers intended. Our nation has consistently decided to accept the delay required to prepare for war at the last minute and the perceived lesser capabilities of a militia compared to an active force in exchange for the benefits of not possessing a large standing military. During the Vietnam War, training and quality of equipment suffered dramatically under a policy of no call-ups. Since the reserves were

⁶⁰ Hart, pg 163.

⁶¹ Meyer, 4, 25.

⁶² Hart, 163.

not going to be used, why spend the money to train them? Today, training and leadership have improved across all service reserve components. Importantly, neither lack of training nor poor leadership has in any way restricted the Air Force from employing the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves. The Air Force has made significant efforts to train its reserve forces and equip them with modern aircraft and equipment. Air reserve forces were employed during both Desert Storm and Kosovo and performed commendably.

However, the criticism of inadequate training continues. The specific argument is that the reserves are not available full time, therefore have less time to train, and therefore are less capable. The counter to the argument is that today's reserve force is so highly experienced, they can perform adequately with less training time. Today, most Air Guard and Reserve leaders have extensive active duty prior experience. In the Air National Guard, approximately 70 percent of the pilots have previous experience in the active component. Most Air National Guard pilots fly their entire careers and are not generally required to stand-down for extended periods in their career for staff or other non-flying assignments.⁶³ Additionally, reservists do not change jobs or locations periodically as in the active force. Both of these contribute to a wealth of experience, which allows the reserves to maintain a high training standard on less time.

Having prior active duty experience and remaining in the job for longer periods of time without interruption provides the reserves with the opportunity to develop excellent leaders. Early criticisms of militia leadership were mostly due to the fact that civilian

appointees rather than qualified, experienced military professionals led the militia of earlier history. This is no longer true. Today's reserve component leaders are highly experienced and fully qualified military professionals.

Another area for concern is readiness. Are reserve units capable and ready to perform contingency operations? A stated reason for not maintaining the 45 day rotation in theater for active duty fighter units was the concern that it was too close to a minimum rotation duration to permit effective continuity of operations for fighter aircraft.⁶⁴ Yet the guard rotates its pilots on a 10 to 14 day basis. The concern is whether that makes them somehow less capable or less ready to fight. Whether the impact of these shorter rotations is positive or negative remains to be determined, however some consider it potentially dangerous to have pilots in theater for such a short duration.⁶⁵ These short duration stays certainly create unique problems. Each pilot is required to be in-country for a minimum of 48 hours prior to any flight. When a guard pilot is only activated for 14 days per year with three to four of those days taken up in transit to and from the theater, he or she is useful in-theater for roughly only ten days. In that time the guard pilot may fly an average of six to eight sorties depending on the tasking. The impact of these shorter rotations on operational effectiveness remains to be determined, but if it turns out the minimum duration for effective fighter operations for active units is more than 45 days, many active duty pilots question the validity of rotating guard pilots through for such short periods. That causes "theater inexperience" when guard units cycle through. Proponents of using the reserves point out that most guard and reserve pilots are highly

⁶³ Meyer, 21.

⁶⁴ RAND, Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, pg 46.

experienced and by now have had several deployments to the desert, and therefore can perform better during these short deployments. Nonetheless, the short duration of reservist's duty in the theater is a valid criticism given the stated criteria used to justify longer deployments for active duty units.

The criticism of lack of availability remains valid. A 1999 RAND study concluded that reserve component fighter forces have limited availability for peacetime contingencies.⁶⁶ Across the first ten AEF's there were about two guard/reserve aircraft per cycle. It therefore takes approximately six reserve component fighter squadrons to roughly equal one active duty squadron.⁶⁷ Guard and reserve fighter units are difficult to task and cannot remain on active duty for extended periods because of the rules governing activation.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁷ Major Mark Hicks, USAF, "Capabilities" briefing to National Defense Fellows, Washington DC, 9 August, 2000.

The rules of availability

“The Congress shall have power to... provide for the common defence... To declare war... to raise and support Armies... to provide for calling forth the Militia...”

The Constitution of the United States of America, Article I

As the role of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve grows, it is increasingly important to understand the rules governing the availability of those forces.⁶⁸ How does the Air Force gain access to reserve forces for contingency versus wartime situations? The first option is a declaration of a national emergency, which can lead to partial or full mobilization. The second is the involuntary call up of up to 200,000 personnel, and the third option is volunteerism.⁶⁹ Currently without a national emergency, law limits the amount of time guard and reserve personnel can be on active duty. Title 10 of the US Code, which outlines the requirement for 14 days of active duty per year unless activated or called up by the President, guides guard members. The President has the power to call up guardsmen and reservists for as much as 270 days without the consent of Congress (he must notify Congress within 60 days of call-up).⁷⁰ Personnel are permitted to volunteer for more active duty time, as they desire. Volunteerism was successful in helping the reserves fill tasking initially, but now that the novelty of Northern and Southern Watch has worn off, reservists are becoming disheartened with multiple deployments just as active duty personnel are. Due to the restrictions on call-up and employment of reserve forces, the amount of time they can be utilized in contingency operations – their overall availability - is inadequate for the current level of tasking.

⁶⁸ Legal limits on mobilization are contained in title 10, U.S. code, section 12301-12305.

⁶⁹ Lucas and Johnson, 8-12.

⁷⁰ RAND, Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, pg 40-41.

Training, readiness and availability may again become significant areas open to criticism, particularly when retention and recruiting problems begin to lower overall experience levels in the guard and reserves. When the experience level falls, the reserve units will no longer be able to make up for training shortfalls with an overabundance of previous experience.

CHALLENGES FACING THE GUARD AND RESERVES

“I am concerned that we may be demanding too much--not just from reservists, but also from their family members and civilian employers. If we commit our people to more than they can reasonably provide, retention could drop drastically.”

Major General John J. Closner, 1993 Chief of Air Force Reserve⁷¹

The bottom line is that the US cannot long sustain any contingency operation or contemplate going to war without the reserve component forces.⁷² However, now the reserve component is beginning to feel stress similar to that upon the active duty forces. That stress is leading to or has highlighted some challenges for the reserve component.

Cost

“Cost considerations argue for a larger proportion of the total force in the reserve component when contemplating Major Theater Warfare (MTW) scenarios and a smaller proportion when contemplating Small-Scale Contingency (SSC) and Operations Other Than War (OOTW) scenarios.”

RAND⁷³

⁷¹ Lucas and Johnson, 5.

⁷² Meyer, 4, 16.

⁷³ RAND Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, 75.

Advocates of the guard and reserves claim that one of the major advantages of having fighter aircraft in the guard and reserves is the reduced cost of maintaining and operating those fighters. On a normal day-to-day basis, they are correct to highlight the significant savings provided by keeping fighters in the reserve component. According to RAND, these savings are due primarily to the reduced number of flying hours produced by each aircraft in the reserve component. If the cost were compared in terms of cost per flying hour, reserve component units and active duty units would be nearly the same. Using guard and reserve fighters in contingency operations negates this advantage. In fact, in a 1999 RAND report, the cost of fighters from active and reserve components were compared in a deployed contingency operation. The results were revealing.⁷⁴ The study indicates guard and reserve fighters are cost effective in the traditional scenario. In time of peace, when massive call-ups are not likely, it is significantly less expensive to have a larger percentage of the fighter force in the reserves (RAND suggests 40 percent). However, in an environment of extended contingency operations that we have today, it is nearly twice as expensive to use reserve component fighters. Currently, approximately 35 percent of the Air Force's fighter strength is in the reserve component – seven of 20 Fighter Wing Equivalents (FWEs) in the total Air Force. The RAND study suggests for contingency operations a more cost-effective percentage is near 20 percent. Under the current structure and mission, it is not fiscally advantageous to maintain 35 percent the fighter force in the reserves.⁷⁵ It has already been established that the active component cannot fulfill the mission without additional assets or support, therefore the RAND

⁷⁴ Ibid., 65. RAND compared the cost per flying hour of a deployed active fighter unit to that of guard and reserve forces in an effort to determine the optimum mix of fighters in the guard and active components respectively.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 75

conclusion of moving some fighters from the reserve component to the active duty component is desirable.

Local/State role/mission

“In recent years, the roughly 870,000 members of the Guard and Reserves, who serve a minimum of a weekend a month and two weeks a year, have become increasingly involved in overseas operations, from hurricane relief in Central America to peacekeeping in the Balkans and patrols in the skies over Iraq.

The New York Times⁷⁶

The dual role for the soldier-citizen is that he and she must be able and available to support the community during local emergencies as well as the nation in times of war.⁷⁷ Reserve members and aircraft conduct aerial spray missions, help control oil spills, fight forest fires, conduct weather reconnaissance, rescue, aeromedical evacuation and transport, and counter-narcotics flights, as well as remain involved in many other community activities.⁷⁸ Participation in contingency operations involving overseas deployments will likely continue to demand a significant portion of members' time and units' resources. Balancing additional deployment requirements with readiness and community concerns further challenges an already stressed scheduling process.⁷⁹ Tasking reservists with additional active duty time each year increases fatigue and disillusionment

⁷⁶ Steven Lee Meyers, “Bush Warns Against ‘Overdeployment,’” The New York Times, February 15, 2001, 1 can be located at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/15/politics/15BUSH.html>, last accessed February 28, 2001.

⁷⁷ Meyer, 11-14.

⁷⁸ Air Force Reserve Command, Headquarters, “Fact sheet,” 4. available at: http://www.af.mil/news/factsheets/Air_Force_Reserve_Command.html, last accessed March 7, 2001.

⁷⁹ Dr. Charles Gross, “The Air National Guard Past, Present, and Future Prospects,” Airpower Journal, (No. 4, Winter 1996, 59-69) available at: <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/api/win96/win96.html>, last accessed March 7, 2001.

with military service among the members and is reportedly a significant cause of strained relationships with employers and families.⁸⁰

A disadvantage of fighters in the reserve component is that supporting a state in time of local crisis is not something for which fighters are useful. Fighter aircraft simply are of no significant use to a state governor in times of local crisis. While it is prestigious for politicians to have fighters in one's state, the major benefit of having fighters in the reserve component remains the low cost of maintaining a ready reserve when not used in contingencies. As has been pointed out, the cost is actually a disadvantage in times of heavy contingency taskings.

Guard and Reserve Retention

“Each of the last three years, the Army, Navy, and Air Force reserves have not met their recruitment goals”
CNN⁸¹

The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve were, like their Army counterparts, originally designed for use as augmentees to the active duty during time of war. Only recently have they been visualized as an integral part of day-to-day Air Force contingency operations. Reduced defense budgets, a smaller active force, and an aggressive national security strategy of engagement and enlargement, have combined to increase reliance on reserve forces. The increased use has created problems for guard and reserve members; foremost is that of managing their time. The bulk of personnel in the reserves are “traditional guardsman” – meaning their reserve position is a second job.

⁸⁰ David T. Fautua, “Army Citizen-Soldiers, Active, Guard, and Reserve Leaders Remain Silent About Overuse of Reserve Components,” Armed Forces Journal, (September 2000), 72-74.

Each member maintains some other full-time civilian job with attendant full-time requirements. With increased demands on their time of added training in preparation for deployment and actual contingency operations, the pressures of maintaining both jobs are becoming severe.⁸² Striking a balance between increasing military service, one's civilian employment responsibilities, and one's family is stressing the traditional guardsman.

A little known fact in United States today, even among guard and reserve communities is that the President of United States has called up reservists involuntarily for three separate contingencies.⁸³ Part-timers are being called more often because active-duty forces have been reduced by 700,000 personnel since 1989 and overseas contingency tasking has increased nearly 40 percent.⁸⁴ On average, our militia citizen soldiers are spending nearly three times as much time on active-duty as they did a decade ago. Tanker and airlift squadrons in the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard are the most often called. The average reserve aircrew is working in his or her reserve job about 110 to 120 days per year while support personnel are averaging about 70 days per year. That is a great deal of time for someone who has another full-time civilian career to protect.⁸⁵ This dramatic increase is a significant source of stress for many citizen soldiers, their families, and their employers.⁸⁶ Additionally, guard members report a reduction/loss of income during mobilization periods since their military pay is typically lower than their civilian income. The increased time required and the loss of income during extended

⁸¹ CNN, "U.S. Faces Challenge Recruiting Reservists."

⁸² Lucas and Johnson, 5-7.

⁸³ Kelley, Post-Gazette, 1.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Hueg, 17.

⁸⁶ Kelley, Post-Gazette, 1.

active duty periods are influencing many traditional guardsmen and reservists to opt out of the guard and reserves and it is becoming more difficult for the guard to maintain programmed strength.^{87 88}

The increased level of dissatisfaction with service in the guard and reserves reflects both a perception of higher risk associated with contingency deployments and the personal economic loss involved.⁸⁹ (“Risk” is personal. There is risk to health involved in deployments to the Middle East and Europe, particularly during flights enforcing no-fly zones, and there may be financial risk involved having to leave one’s civilian job for extended periods.) During a recent contingency deployment to Kuwait, one frustrated A-10 pilot stated: “I didn’t sign up for this,” meaning he didn’t sign up for the risk incurred currently in Southern Watch.⁹⁰ For the past several years, coalition aircraft have been routinely fired upon by Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery (AAA). Thus, some of the same stress on morale that led to active duty retention and recruiting problems is beginning to cause similar problems for guardsmen and reservists.

Employer Support Waning

“‘Overdeployments’ strained troops, their families and, in the case of the National Guard and Reserves, their civilian employers.”
President George W. Bush⁹¹

⁸⁷ Lucas and Johnson, 5.

⁸⁸ Gross, 9.

⁸⁹ RAND, Costs and Benefits of Reserve Participation, xx.

⁹⁰ Personal interview with A-10 ANG pilot. April 1999, Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait. The pilot wishes to remain anonymous.

⁹¹ Myers The New York Times, 1.

The extra duty time reservists are working is affecting the relationships with civilian employers. Employers of reservists and guardsmen suffer one of the greatest liabilities of the current policy. They must accommodate increasingly frequent absences for training and active-duty, sometimes for extended periods. Coworkers are required to take up the slack during these absences and often the employer is unable to hire a competent temporary replacement. Federal law protects reservists from being fired or discriminated against as a result of reserve service and guarantees seniority protection and job security, but few civilian industries or privately operated businesses can afford to allow employees to leave their jobs repeatedly.⁹² In many cases the employer is obligated to maintain the cost of personal benefits such as healthcare throughout the guardsman's absence. Today's economy of near full employment actually exacerbates the problem faced by employers looking for temporary help. Despite benefits provided by the reservist employees, the employer must, by law, accommodate absences.⁹³ Still, the law doesn't smooth strained relationships between employers and reservist employees.

For small businesses, the impact of employee absences is even greater. In small businesses, it is difficult to hire temporary replacements for specialized skills and it is increasingly difficult to retain employees through extended absences. Just when the replacement is trained, the reservist returns taking his or her job back. It can be frustrating for fellow civilian employees as well as employers. Often they are required to work harder and longer to accomplish the work that would normally be accomplished by

⁹² Lieutenant Colonel Henry L. Straub, ANG, "The New Militia Tradition and the Traditional Air National Guard Commander," (Air War College Paper, Maxwell AFB, AL. April 1997), 28.

⁹³ Meyer, 11-12.

the reservist employee. Small business employers are therefore more reluctant to release guard members for active-duty beyond their normal annual training requirements.⁹⁴

As a result of this increased dependency on the reserve component, many of the best and the brightest are opting to leave the service altogether. Most cannot routinely afford extended time away from their civilian job – and, like the A-10 pilot in Kuwait, they feel they did not sign up for this type of extended absence in the first place. Those who remain are faced with reconciling increasing demands of the reserves with their “real” career. Though the Air Force hasn’t yet experienced this, 26 soldiers from the Army’s 49th Division – an Army National Guard division that recently spent six months deployed to Bosnia - filed labor complaints because they were fired or told to quit upon their return from extended active duty.⁹⁵ Some studies indicate job worry is a major factor in a member’s decision to leave the reserves.⁹⁶ The real problem cannot go away. For traditional reservists and guardsmen, military service is only part-time. They have “real jobs” they must consider when deciding if they can be away so often. The bottom line is that this policy of increased dependence on the guard and reserve is “squeezing citizen-soldiers out of the force.”⁹⁷

Recruiting

“People will remain the cornerstone of our forces. Well trained, highly motivated service members will continue to be the heart of our combat readiness.”

General John W. Vessey, Jr., Former Chairman, JCS

⁹⁴ Gross, 9.

⁹⁵ Fautua, Armed Forces Journal, 73.

⁹⁶ Hueg, 17.

The outlook for pilot manning in the guard and reserves is bleak.⁹⁸ Reserve fighter units recruit the overwhelming majority of their pilots from the active-duty. Recently, they have been experiencing increased difficulty finding qualified personnel leaving active-duty.⁹⁹ The active duty pilot shortage has reached a point where not many pilots remain who are willing to leave active duty and join the guard. (Note: retirement eligible pilots like Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels are not eligible to join the reserves and guard due to grade limitations. Thus this pool of qualified pilots is not available to assist guard and reserve dwindling retention.) Guard and reserve commanders feel the increased demands placed on their predominantly part-time force have discouraged recruiting and undermined retention.¹⁰⁰ This is coupled with a two-year extension in service requirement for active pilots approaching their 8th year. Pilots can no longer leave active duty after six or eight years from the date of graduation from pilot training. They are now obligated to remain on active duty for ten years from their graduation date. This has the effect of significantly reducing the eligible pool of reserve pilot new-hires at a time when retention and recruiting are at an unprecedented low.

The reserve component recruiting problem is magnified when it comes to hiring full-time members.¹⁰¹ The high salary of the airlines, so readily available to most military pilots leaving active duty, makes a full-time reservist job with its military pay somewhat less appealing. The problem is expected to worsen as the need for full-time personnel increases as guard and reserve units receive further AEF tasking to support contingency

⁹⁷ Fautua, Armed Forces Journal, 74.

⁹⁸ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 36.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁰ Gross, 9.

operations. Notification of tasking itself is causing many to make the decision to leave. Many full-timers left active duty to avoid multiple contingency deployments and frequent family separations. Tasking them with these duties gives them the same reasons to leave the guard. Remaining a full-timer in a similar environment defeats their reason for leaving active duty in the first place.

Both the guard and reserves are now experiencing problems similar to the active force. The root of the problem is active duty fighter pilot retention. A look at current initiatives to address active duty retention might reveal new potential solutions.

CURRENT INITIATIVES AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

“When you are up to your *behind* in alligators, it is difficult to remember your initial objective was to drain the swamp.” (“*behind*” substituted)

Sign at infantry training school at US Army’s Fort Polk, Louisiana

Initiatives to reduce stress on active duty units to date include increased tasking of reserve and guard units and increases in reserve pilot manning within active duty units. Some of these initiatives created problems of their own.

One current initiative is the request for reserve component fighter units to voluntarily participate in more contingency operations. Many units accepted taskings, however the total contribution of fighter assets to peacetime contingency operations is relatively small considering there are over 800 fighter aircraft in the guard and reserves.¹⁰² While the

¹⁰¹ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 36.

¹⁰² Lucas and Johnson, 1.

guard and reserves account for near 35 percent of the fighter force structure, they fulfill only six percent of the AEF tasking.¹⁰³

The militia's traditional structure is better suited to a Cold War environment where they are mobilized two weeks per year and one weekend per month.¹⁰⁴ Reserve component fighter squadrons support contingency taskings by rainbowing units – using three fighter squadrons to cover one 90-day tasking. This spreads the burden of deployment across personnel from several different fighter squadrons but does not utilize aircraft to their potential capability. Sharing the tasking among several reserve units allows the use of a greater number of volunteers to man the contingency and does relieve some stress on the active component but is an inefficient use of assets. If those aircraft were assigned to active duty units, they would fill an equal share of the tasking rather than only six-percent.

Using volunteers and reservists' annual two-week training to support a contingency is an effective use of reserve personnel but higher costs and inefficient use of the aircraft are significant disadvantages ill afforded in today's environment. Using the two-week annual training in contingency operations works well for non-fighter units because their training during peacetime is identical to their mission during the contingency operation.¹⁰⁵ Fighter units however, have unique training requirements. They must "spin-up" prior to deployment. That requires additional work time. Time required to be "in-country" prior to flying contingency missions, the type of mission flown which actually has proven to

¹⁰³ Hicks, Capabilities briefing; Gross, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Lucas and Johnson, 5.

atrophy fighter piloting skills, and the lack of any training flights while in theater are significant issues when fighter units are deployed. Using up the two weeks annual training time additionally limits a fighter unit's training opportunities back in the states. Guard squadrons are limited in their ability to recuperate lost training opportunities. There is seldom adequate time to spin back up from the loss of training experienced while deployed.

Options for increasing availability of guard fighter units were the topic of a 1995 Air War College paper by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Lucas, ANG and Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Johnson, USAF. The authors looked at two primary options: 1) move all fighters out of the guard into the active force and, 2) increase full-time manning in deployable guard fighter units.

Transferring fighters from the reserves to the active-duty force was not recommended because of cost and probable political opposition.¹⁰⁶ The authors were persuaded by the fact that, in peacetime and at home, guard units are less expensive to maintain and operate than their active-duty counterparts. However they did not consider the cost to operate those same units in a contingency. The RAND study discussed earlier indicates just the opposite is true during contingency operations.¹⁰⁷ Regardless of cost considerations, it is not feasible to move *all* of the fighter forces out of the reserve component into the active forces. That would likely face difficult opposition from members of Congress. However, for many reasons, and with the current projected

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 12.

mission of the Air Force, moving *some* fighters from the reserve to the active component is feasible and attractive.

The central theme of the second option explored by Colonels Lucas and Johnson was to increase the number of active-duty personnel in guard units. The authors felt this would help break down the barriers between the two cultures of the reserve and active components and would increase the level of understanding and knowledge of guard culture among active-duty personnel. What the authors envision is rotating active duty pilots through guard units as a regular assignment. A certain amount of friction and parochialism exists between the guard and the active-duty and exposing more active-duty personnel to the guard system may help educate the active-duty force with regard to the reserve component. This option may not be advantageous to the active duty pilot however. Some concerns are that the assignment might become one where the active duty pilot works and deploys more than the guard pilots will. Another concern is that the active pilot may see a better lifestyle and shorten his or her active career in order to remain with the guard, thereby exacerbating the active duty retention problem. Also, there is concern over where these active duty pilots will come from. There is already a critical pilot shortage in the active force, so how will the active force free up more pilots?

One initiative under consideration is to place 30 newly graduated fighter pilots per year into guard and reserve units.¹⁰⁸ Currently, the “pipeline” for producing new fighter pilots

¹⁰⁷ RAND, Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, 68.

¹⁰⁸ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 40.

is capable of graduating more pilots than the active duty force can absorb. This initiative would provide a place to absorb and train those pilots and has the added benefit of seasoning the younger pilots by allowing them to fly with and learn from the older experienced pilots in the guard. New pilots traditionally are not tasked with extra duties and spend the majority of their time learning how to employ their fighter in combat. This option appears attractive.¹⁰⁹

A variation of the second option recommended in the study by Colonels Lucas and Johnson was to increase the number of active-duty personnel in only a *few* selected reserve fighter units. These units would then perform the largest percentage of guard contingency support taskings. This is similar to the creation of another active duty unit only the unit will cost less for normal, day-to-day operation to maintain and operate in peacetime. This option has similar pros and cons to that above.

The authors concluded the limited availability of guard fighter assets for anything other than global warfare is driven by a manning structure more suited to the Cold War environment and by the negative impact increased military service has on the traditional workforce.¹¹⁰ They foresaw the difficulties an increased optempo has for the traditional guardsman.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lucas and Johnson, 5.

Another program initiative currently underway in active fighter units is the Fighter Reserve Associate Program (FRAP).¹¹¹ This program places reserve pilots in active duty fighter units. It was developed out of the highly successful associate aircraft program of Air Material Command (AMC). In AMC the aircraft can fly more often than the active crews can fly them so adding crews effectively adds available airlift.¹¹² Associate units, in which reserve and active crews both fly aircraft that are assigned to active units, have operated effectively in the transport and tanker communities for several decades.¹¹³

FRAP assigned reserve pilots work traditional part time duty, in an active duty squadron.¹¹⁴ They are assigned to active duty positions to help with the shortage of experience in active duty fighter units, to free experienced active-duty pilots for other assignments. The program increases the experience to non-experience ratio within the squadron since the reservists are experienced in the weapon system. That aspect of the program is working out well in that indeed all reservists hired to date are experienced pilots with the vast majority being highly qualified instructor pilots. Reserve pilots now teach active duty pilots how to fly the F-16 at Luke AFB and the F-15 at Tyndall AFB. Tyndall AFB's Air National Guard F-15 IP program will allow 21 active-duty pilots to return to other pilot assignments. At Luke Air Force Base the reserve associate program allows 45 more active-duty fighter pilots to fill positions at assignments around the world.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 33.

¹¹² Hueg, 16.

¹¹³ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 33.

On the surface, the FRAP program appears to offer an effective solution to the fighter pilot shortage, however an unintended consequence is a clash of cultures between the guard and active duty forces.

Unintended consequences

“In war we must always leave room for strokes of fortune and accidents that cannot be foreseen.”

Polybius, Greek historian, 205-125 B.C.

Both the original heavy aircraft and the new fighter aircraft reserve associate programs have benefits easily identified, however as the RAND study cautioned, unintended consequences have developed.¹¹⁶

The squadron commander of the FRAP test program at Shaw was overall very pleased with the program and recommends it continue for the duration of the fighter pilot experience shortage.¹¹⁷ There were several initial concerns including whether this would increase the workload on active-duty personnel, especially in the area of additional duties. Would a rift develop in the squadron between active and reserve components, an “us versus them” attitude? Would reserve pilots show up for briefings/duty unprepared? Would the program increase personnel optempo on active-duty personnel with respect to deployments? Would the program negatively affect retention on the younger first term active-duty pilots?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

¹¹⁵ Bosker, AF Print News, 2.

¹¹⁶ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 39.

¹¹⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Steve Searcy, USAF “Position paper on the Fighter Reserve Associate Test,” (an unpublished paper, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 17 August, 2000), 1.

¹¹⁸ Searcy, 2.

The active-duty pilots in the squadron with the FRAP pilots did not inform their commander of any complaints concerning the program, however other pilots in the wing did “discuss” the program.¹¹⁹ There was some resentment in the wing, particularly when it came to operation Allied Force, where reserve pilots “got” to fly in the war and active-duty pilots were left behind. Sending reservists to the war, rather than active duty pilots had a decidedly negative impact on the morale of those left behind and left many questioning why they should stay on active duty. Many see the program as a good deal - bad deal thing. The reserve pilots get to stay in a good deal location flying jets and go to the war while the active-duty pilots go to less desirable tours and continue to move every two to three years.

Active duty and guard cultures differ. On some issues, the two cultures clash. Active duty pilots believe they should “get” to go to the war before calling in the reserves. They often see themselves as the “first string” and feel their additional sacrifices entitle them to priority in combat and resources. Reserve pilots, as they would in a reserve unit, have specific limitations on their schedules: “I can only fly Tuesday and Wednesday next week because I have an airline trip.” Additionally, they often are required to change the schedule at the last minute: “I’m stuck out on a trip and cannot come in early tomorrow.”¹²⁰ It is their culture to only come to the squadron to fly. They do not normally

¹¹⁹ Multiple personal interviews with pilots within the 20th FW at Shaw. Most officers are reluctant to voice any criticism of the program in an open forum, therefore specific comments will not be attributed to individual officers other than the author.

¹²⁰ This information is taken from conversations the author had with FRAP pilots in the 20th FW at Shaw AFB, SC during June, 1999. The FRAP program at Shaw was in the 78th Fighter Squadron. The author was commander of a sister squadron. The author interviewed two commanders of the 78th FS over a period of several months. Lt. Col. Steve Searcy, and Lt. Col. Jim Cody each commanded the 78th.

fulfill other duties in the squadron such as training officer or scheduling officer. They have limited work periods and must use them to fly in order to meet flying requirements. Full-timers fill ancillary duty jobs in a guard or reserve unit and the active duty pilots fill those jobs in the active duty squadron. In an active duty unit, this has the effect of increasing workload on the active duty pilots since the number of active duty pilots in a FRAP squadron is less than a non-FRAP squadron and equal duties must be performed.

During contingency operations, reservists are required to remain on extended active duty for only two weeks. Therefore, while members of their active duty squadron are deployed in an ongoing contingency for more than 90 days, the reservists contribute only 14 days (including time for travel). There are three reservists for each active duty slot taken away from the squadron so the total available time is less than 45 days per year unless the reserve pilots voluntarily spend more time overseas. This has the effect of slightly increasing the deployed days per active duty pilot over their two to three year tour at that base.

The differences in culture can be overcome, but not without hard feelings from time to time. However the biggest problem with the FRAP program is the effect it has on active duty retention. The active duty guys see the better lifestyle and want to leave active duty. Their spouses see the money the FRAP pilots make with the airlines and influence the decision. Why not leave active duty and have it all? Mixing the reservists in with the active duty pilots shows the young guys the greenery on the other side of the fence and

Additionally, Colonel Searcy wrote a paper on the subject upon relinquishing command. See: Lieutenant Colonel Steve Searcy, "Position paper on the Fighter Reserve Associate Test," an unpublished paper, Air

increases the likelihood they will leave active duty. Active duty service is often referred to as a training assignment for the guard and reserves.

Other fighter associate programs such as those at Luke, Nellis, and Tyndall Air Force Bases are designed to replace up to 150 active duty fighter pilots with reserve component pilots, freeing the active duty pilots to remain in operational units, be reassigned to staff billets, or used in other capacities. In today's high optempo world of contingency deployments, these billets formerly permitted active duty pilots to fly fighters without overseas deployments and were regarded as very desirable assignments.¹²¹ Placing reservists in some of these highly desirable assignments in effect reduces the opportunity for active pilots to remain in a fighter while getting a respite from contingency deployments. Since reservists now fill up to 150 good-deal assignments, it actually increases the opportunity for active duty pilots to be assigned to non-fighter, alpha, remote, and non-flying assignments.¹²² This has produced an additional negative impact on active duty fighter pilot retention as the RAND study warned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

“Even with the best technology, weapons, and management in the world, the future effectiveness of the U.S. military will turn on the quality and readiness of the soldiers, sailors, aircrews, and marines who are ‘at the tip of the spear.’ People matter most.”

Former Secretary of Defense William Perry¹²³

War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 17 August, 2000.

¹²¹ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 34-37.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Carter and Perry, 209.

Until now attempts at relieving stress on the overworked active force have been moderately successful at reducing optempo but only marginally so at impacting the retention problem. Some have created new problems due to unintended consequences. These unintended consequences have the force in a catch 22. The more initiatives created, the more problems created by the initiatives; and the base problems of overtasking and low retention get worse. These two basic problems are responsible for each other as well. Overwork causes low retention and low retention causes those left on active duty to be overworked. The problems must be looked at in the whole rather than separately. The following recommendations address the base problem of retention among fighter units in the active Air Force. Some of these recommendations will alleviate crew chief retention as well. When the core problem of retention within the active duty ranks is improved, the ripple effect along with improvements delivered by these other recommendations themselves will correct many of the retention and recruiting problems of both the active duty and reserve components.

The following recommendations are presented in bullet form followed by discussion.

- **CHANGES TO FORCE STRUCTURE**

“Changes in military systems come about only through the pressures of public opinion or disaster in war.”

Billy Mitchell, Brigadier General, USAAF

- **Transfer some fighters to active duty units**

Contingency operations are prominent in the Air Force’s future. Air Force structure should adjust to make the most efficient use of available assets in order to fulfill that

tasking. Across the first ten AEF's there were on average about two Air National Guard/Air Force Reserve aircraft per cycle. "It takes six reserve component squadrons to roughly equal one active squadron."¹²⁴ Keeping 35 percent of the fighter force in the reserves while only fulfilling 6 percent of the tasking is an inefficient way to contribute to reducing optempo. Budget realities and current optempo suggest a reevaluation of the current force structure is needed. Positioning fighters in the reserve component is sound fiscal policy when use is limited to preparation for global warfare because of the reduced cost of maintaining and supporting reserve component fighter units. However, using guard and reserve fighter units in contingency operations is significantly more expensive. Shifting some fighters from the reserve component to the active component will provide increased capability to use those fighters in contingency operations. Full-time active duty pilots will be able to fill 90-day taskings with those aircraft relieving stress on other active units. The Air Force should therefore shift some fighters to the active duty – reducing the proportion in the guard from the current 35 percent toward the 20 percent supported by the RAND study.¹²⁵ This course of action, while possibly difficult to pursue against local Congressional opposition, may prove best for the nation as a whole. It remains undesirable, for reasons stated earlier, to conduct operations completely without the guard and reserves, therefore the Air Force must insure if fighters are moved to active duty, those reserve units will be replaced with equally usable capabilities in times of national crisis. In war, the Air Force must include the reserves, but the policy of using so many reserve fighters during contingency operations is not sustainable due to cost and retention issues.

¹²⁴ Hicks, Capabilities briefing.

¹²⁵ RAND, Principles for Determining the Air Force Active/Reserve Mix, 73.

Over time, the continued use of annual training, in fighter units, to support peacetime contingency operations negatively impacts overall combat capability of Air National Guard and Reserve fighter units.¹²⁶ For that reason, it is not recommended to use the two-week annual training of fighter unit personnel for contingency operations. The other process for using the guard and reserves is the presidential call-up. Call-ups significantly negatively affect reserve component retention, recruiting, and employer relationships due to employer, family, and time constraint issues discussed. A better solution is to transfer fighters to the active duty, and increase the number of crews for airlift and tanker units within the reserve component.

➤ **Re-train reserve personnel in units that give up fighters**

Many specialties within the Air Force reserve component do not require frequent deployment, i.e., non-high demand resources, yet remain significant both in times of peace and combat. Many of these billets have no contingency taskings, and have steady, predictable schedules that fit well with civilian jobs. Fighter units that transfer aircraft to the active component should pick up some of those duties. Personnel should cross-train to critical specialties such as airlift and tanker units or expand into space operations, unmanned aerial vehicle operations, or missile operations. In some cases, this may release active duty members for other positions in the active force as the reserve associate programs intended to do with pilots. As an example, the Buckley ANG in Colorado could move its F-16s to the active force and those Buckley jobs could transfer to space

¹²⁶ Lucas and Johnson, 7.

command related billets. Others units should become UAV units, thereby releasing active duty pilots for operational flying assignments.

The Air Force is exploring opportunities to purchase additional C-17s. Many of these new aircraft could be assigned to the reserves. Placement of this new state of the art aircraft in the reserve component provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate good will toward local members of Congress. Transport and tanker aircraft are critical to deployments and contingency operations and are some of the most heavily tasked specialties in the total force. Replacing some fighters with C-17s keeps the guard and reserve involved in every contingency operation, thus fulfilling the desire for reserve involvement, and it relieves the high optempo of both active and reserve components by increasing airlift capability.

One major advantage for exchanging fighters for lift and tanker aircraft is the similarity of the tanker and airlift mission with the career of an airline pilot. It is one matter to fly from point A to point B, but it is entirely different to operate a combat fighter in between takeoff and landing. There is minimal additional training or preparation time required for heavy aircraft prior to participation in a contingency operation. Tanker and lift missions are more compatible with civilian and airline careers due to similarities in job requirements and ease of scheduling. Another significant advantage is the effect on active duty fighter pilot retention. More fighter pilots will stay on active duty if that is their only opportunity to fly a fighter.

➤ **Keep the newest aircraft in the active force**

Keep the newest aircraft in the active forces and send older aircraft to the guard. F-16s in Korea are older Block 30 type aircraft while the South Carolina Guard flies new Block 52 aircraft. That means a pilot can leave the active force and fly an F-16 ten years newer than the one he left. Many active pilots find it difficult to understand rationale that has an active unit in Korea, ten minutes from potential combat, flying the older Block 30 while a guard unit back in the states, that potentially may deploy to a contingency once every three years has the new Block 52. Neither of these types of F-16s is considered “outdated”, as was the criticism of reserve equipment during Vietnam, but it sends the wrong signal to active duty pilots. It is not a matter of outdated equipment so much as it is a matter of perception as to whom has priority.

➤ **Continue to assign some newly graduated active duty fighter pilots to select guard units**

Currently the active duty training “pipeline” is capable of producing more fighter pilots than the active duty can absorb while maintaining minimum experience levels. A program of placing some of these new pilots in select guard units allows pilot production to remain at the higher level. Those young pilots are able to season and learn from the guard and reserve pilots and the additional manning increases the unit’s availability for contingency operations. This program should continue and the Air Force should plan to utilize those select units in contingency operations more than units with less full-time personnel. If some fighters are transferred to the active component, the active duty pilots in those units can be absorbed into the active force.

- **RETENTION**

“The bottom line is that pilot retention must improve significantly.”

RAND

For the two reasons discussed, it is necessary to rely heavily on the reserve component for use in contingency operations. Because of this workload both the guard and reserves are beginning to have retention and recruiting problems similar to those of the active force. The guard and reserves cannot long sustain the current level of contingency operations while simultaneously suffering these retention and recruiting problems. Something must change. Change should begin with active duty retention.

Active duty retention and recruiting problems are one cause of the need to use the guard and reserves so extensively today. Using the guard and reserve so extensively is causing retention problems in the guard and reserves similar to those in the active force. Poor retention in the guard and reserves causes poor recruiting, etc. When the Air Force improves active duty retention, reserve component retention will follow.

➤ **Make active duty more attractive than reserve duty to pilots**

The Air Force is encouraging pilots to leave active duty with policies overwhelmingly favoring reserve duty. The Air Force must find a way to retain more pilots. The solution is to make active duty more attractive than reserve duty. Many of the following recommendations will help.

Retention of active duty pilots is a critical issue. The active duty force is the bottom brick supporting the Air Force building. Letting the bottom brick crumble, risks losing the entire building. Airline demand, which is a primary factor affecting retention, will not decline. Therefore a passive approach to the retention problem will not be successful. Aggressive retention initiatives are urgently required.

❖ Phoenix Aviator

The Air Force should continue to expand and provide programs such as the Phoenix aviator program, which defers rather than discourages airline careers.¹²⁷ Phoenix aviator assists a pilot in a career transition to the airlines by insuring the pilot will be in a current flying assignment when he or she reaches the 20-year retirement eligibility. It essentially guarantees the officer a flying assignment at the end of a 20-year career so he or she will be competitive for an airline job. It is a significant incentive to those pilots who intend to pursue employment with the airlines because it removes the worry most of them share about being competitive for the airline career. Applicants should be current and active flyers when applying to the airlines and this program guarantees them of that. Without Phoenix aviator, many pilots choose to depart active duty when they expect to be assigned to non-flying duties. The Phoenix Aviator program is an excellent compromise. It keeps pilots competitive for the airline career and provides them an opportunity to reach military retirement eligibility simultaneously.

❖ Keep the fighters on active duty

Reduce the number of fighters in the reserve component. As stated earlier, this recommendation provides for increased utilization of limited assets, however its adoption has longer lasting and more significant affects. Transferring a third of the fighters from the guard to the active duty reduces the opportunity to fly fighters *outside* of the active duty, thus keeping pilots who want to fly fighters on active duty. The primary motivation for many pilots is to fly fighters. This recommendation makes the opportunities to fly fighters greater on active duty than in the reserves. That will have a significant impact on a pilot's decision to leave active duty, making it one of potentially leaving fighters altogether. This goes to the heart of the motivation for being there in the first place. One would potentially have to give up flying fighters altogether in order to leave active duty. That will increase retention.

❖ Share the “bad deals” and give some of the “good deals” back to the active force

Currently, many choice fighter assignments are in the guard and reserves adding to the perception that guard and reserve assignments are more attractive than active duty assignments. The Air Force should examine options to return some of desirable assignments to the active duty and pursue methods for sharing some of the not so good assignments with the reserve component. For example, the Air Force should examine the feasibility of tasking guard and reserve pilots with Air Liaison Officers (ALO) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) controlling duties. Reserve component pilots can be trained as ALOs to be used during call-ups and in times of war. They could remain active

¹²⁷ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 9.

flying pilots who receive ALO training while remaining current in flying duties as well.

Air Force reserve component ALO trained pilots could work with their Army reserve counterparts on a local level. Additionally, reserve personnel should be considered for UAV controller duty, allowing active duty pilots to return to fill vacant positions in the active duty.

Reserve the aggressor squadron assignments at Nellis AFB for active duty F-16 pilots.

The aggressor assignment is a great tour for fighter pilots and should be used as a carrot to keep some of them on active duty. Making the aggressors a reserve assignment had a negative impact on morale. Giving them back to the active duty will have a positive impact. Choice assignments like those of the aggressors should be used as a reward for pilots who have done well – a carrot for exceptional performance. For example the aggressor assignments should be used to reward pilots for their sacrifice of a second remote tour in Korea or Saudi Arabia. It provides something for active duty pilots to strive for, an incentive to remain on active duty.

➤ **Stop assigning rated pilots to control UAV's**

Fighter pilots are expensive to train and therefore should be considered a national asset. Once trained in the primary mission of flying their fighter, their time away from that duty, unless specifically required for career broadening and enhancement, should be limited. Other personnel should be trained to control UAVs. The training pilots receive is too expensive and too specific for them to be “retrained” into controlling UAVs. Controlling, or “flying” a UAV does not require as intense or expensive of a training

curriculum as training a pilot. Newly acquired officers (or non-commissioned officers) can be trained to control UAVs. Many civilian computer games offer excellent training and many young people today are capable of fulfilling this role. It is not required to use a previously fully qualified pilot to operate a UAV. This practice should stop.

➤ **Increase promotion rates among pilots**

Increase the promotion opportunity to major for pilots. The last active duty major's list promotion rate for pilots was 86.7 percent, lower than every other line officer field in the Air Force for that board.¹²⁸ This has a significant negative impact on morale in the pilot force. While currently more than 2000 pilots short, 13 percent of those eligible for promotion to major, are told they are not wanted. This just doesn't make sense. The Air Force certainly has a need for pilots. With such a shortage, there must be available positions for more of them. Why then is the promotion rate so low? If it is limited due to grade restrictions - the number of officers in each grade is directed by Congress – then the Air Force should request grade relief from Congress for the duration of the pilot shortage. It simply does not make for good policy to continue to release pilots at that high of a rate when the Air Force is so short.

The two most critical groups of pilots, as far as retention is concerned, are pilots in the two groups that are approaching their 10 and 15 years from pilot training graduation date. The first group is reaching the end of their initial pilot training commitment – that time they owed the Air Force as payback for their training - and the second group is reaching

¹²⁸ Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) promotion statistics from AFPC web site, available at: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>, last accessed 9 Feb, 01.

the end of their initial bonus-payback period – another traditionally high separation phase. The pilots nearing 15 years are also eligible for promotion to major. Influencing the retention behavior of these two groups is increasingly important as they generate the greatest losses and represent the primary pilot retention problem for the Air Force. Better retention among these target groups will increase the number of experienced pilots as well as the overall number. Retention initiatives, especially among pilots reaching the end of their bonus-payback period remain critical.¹²⁹ Promote and retain these pilots.

➤ **Increase pay**

Former Secretary of Defense William Perry pointed out in 1999 that a significant raise in military pay was required to counteract low retention and recruiting. In his book with Former Undersecretary Ashton Carter he said, “the discrepancy between military pay and civilian pay has reached 13 percent.”¹³⁰ The last time the United States faced such a crisis in retention and recruiting, significant pay raises -1980 and 1981 - helped considerably.¹³¹ The new administration has stated their intention to increase military pay. If such pay raises are indeed instituted, expect positive results to appear almost immediately.

• **KOREA: Address retention problems created by remote assignments to Korea**

"The difference between mediocrity and greatness is the feeling these guys have for each other. Most people call it team spirit. When the players are imbued with that special feeling, you know you've got yourself a winning team."
Vince Lombardi

¹²⁹ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, 2.

¹³⁰ Carter and Perry, 214.

➤ **Reduce the hardship of family separation caused by assignments to Korea**

Filling remote billets in Korea is causing the most severe retention problem among F-16 crew chiefs, maintenance personnel, and pilots.¹³² The Air Force is currently considering removing the full-time fighter wing from Kunsan, Korea and filling the requirement with a rotating AEF.¹³³ Replacing the active duty full-time wing with a rotating AEF is one possible and desirable remedy. Another option is to completely remove some of the fighter squadrons from Korea. With the rest of the force being undermanned, consideration should be given to moving pilots from Korea to active units elsewhere. Perhaps send one Kunsan squadron to Okinawa, and return one each F-16 and F-15 squadron to the states. These two squadrons could then relieve some of the pressure of frequent deployments on stateside, Pacific and European units.

As a side note, the Air Force if not already doing so, should begin gathering data on the number of divorces among personnel assigned to, and returning from, Korea are experiencing. This information will support changing the force structure in Korea.

➤ **Make Korean assignments tax exempt similar to Operations Southern and Northern Watch¹³⁴**

¹³¹ Hammond, 4.

¹³² Author's personal interviews with crew chiefs departing the 55th fighter squadron leaving active duty from 1998-2000; author's interview with Air Force Undergraduate pilot training students at Vance AFB, August, 1998.

¹³³ F. Whitten Peters, Secretary of the Air Force, interview with author (National Defense Fellowship students), August, 2000.

¹³⁴ This idea was first presented to the author by Lieutenant Colonel David Rue, interview by author, April 1999, Shaw AFB, SC.

If closing some of the squadrons in Korea or reducing the commitment through the use of a rotating air expeditionary wing is not possible, as a minimum the Air Force should provide increased financial benefits for those enduring such long family separations by making Korea a tax-exempt duty location. Many younger troops often volunteer to deploy to, or extend a deployment in, Turkey or Saudi Arabia in an effort to earn extra money. Both areas are currently tax-exempt combat zones meaning enlisted pay (and a portion of officer pay) is tax-free for the entire month when any portion of that month is spent in the combat zone. This is a significant incentive, morale boost, and perk particularly for the enlisted force. This policy should be extended to unaccompanied personnel in Korea. If each of the 36,000 military personnel pays on average \$5,000 per year in taxes, the total monetary effect of this change is \$180,000,000 (that's million) less income into the government in the form of taxes. (Even if each pays on average \$10,000 per year, the cost is only \$360 million.) This is not significant in terms of the federal budget yet it is a significant incentive and morale boost for military members.

- **DO AWAY WITH FRAP AND ASSOCIATE FIGHTER JOBS**

“Desire is the key to motivation...”
Mario Andretti

Air power is the tool of choice for use of military force in overseas contingencies. In order to fill the tasking, the Air Force called upon the guard and reserves to assist. While retention remained low in the active force, the Air Force implemented the FRAP program to fill the void caused by the continued loss of experienced pilots. FRAP, while effective in the short term, unfortunately caused exactly the unintended consequences RAND

mentioned in their study.¹³⁵ Active duty pilots are resigning to compete for this desirable option. An initiative designed to cope with high active-duty loss rates, thus has added to the retention problem. The program should be discontinued at the earliest possible juncture.

- **RECRUITING**

There is a general lack of patriotism in the United States today.”
Fox News, Sunday, 1 Jan, 01

Recruiting is one of the most important missions the Air Force can address. All Air Force units and members, active and reserve, should become part of the recruiting effort.

Perhaps some of the lack of patriotism pointed out by Fox News, is in part because we in the military are too busy to get out into the country and show our own patriotism. From 1998 through 2000, pilots from Shaw AFB from were encouraged to support air shows, static displays, and career days with F-16s, however it was difficult to get pilots to attend such events. Many stated it was too difficult to fit these events into their already hectic schedules. Many said that because of the high optempo, when they were home from contingency duty, they did not want to volunteer to go away again. If the Air Force, both active and reserve, cannot support recruiting events, the recruiting problem will continue.

While attempting to support a college military exposure day in April, 2000 it became apparent the local Air Force recruiter did not understand procedures for requesting

¹³⁵ RAND, The Air Force Pilot Shortage, xiv.

aircraft and pilot support. All recruiters should fully understand the procedures for requesting support and all active duty and reserve units should be encouraged and funded to support recruiting activities.

There is an Air Force recruiting effort titled “Air Force Experience” using a full-scale early model F-16, cut into pieces and placed in a semi tractor-trailer touring the United States. This F-16 is set up in shopping malls around the country and used to show the public our aircraft. The accompanying semi is loaded with computer cockpit simulation stations where excited youth can “fly” the F-16. This is a great recruiting tool. Currently however, there are no F-16 pilots available for the people to talk with. The average civilian attendee has several questions about the aircraft, but contractor personnel are the only personnel available to answer questions.¹³⁶ F-16 pilots should be tasked to support this recruiting effort at every stop it makes across America. Guard and reserve pilots should be tasked with this duty along with their active duty counterparts. Reserve component pilots work weekends and are spread out across America in such a manner as to easily support this effort.

Recruiting is not only required outside the Air Force, but inside as well. Previous to the increased contingency deployment schedule, career days were held annually at pilot training bases. Aircraft and crews from all over the Air Force flew into pilot training bases to provide information to the young pilots. This program should be revived. Guard and reserve aircraft and crews should be tasked to support this effort as well. Recruiting is a never-ending mission. Support should come from all aspects of the total force.

¹³⁶ Author’s personal participation in recruiting with the “Air Force Experience,” Davenport Iowa, July 14-17, 2000.

CONCLUSIONS

“Take care of the troops and they will take care of you.”
Former Secretary of Defense William Perry¹³⁷

The world has evolved to a place where intervention is commonplace and air power is the weapon of choice. The Air Force will be tasked to support intervention and contingency operations throughout the foreseeable future and must therefore prepare for such missions. Changes to doctrine, policy, and force structure are required to fulfill the mission.

Recent changes and initiatives have begun to help relieve the stress on the active duty. Among those, the AEF concept was the most successful. The AEF concept established predictability of schedule and was a welcome step toward encouraging pilots and crew chiefs to remain on active duty. The AEF scheduling should continue.

The FRAP program developed out of the associate pilot program from AMC but is not as effective. Unintended consequences have had negative effects on active duty morale and retention. The program causes more retention issues than it solves and should be discontinued as soon as the current pilot shortage allows.

The increase in deployments over the last ten years caused such stress on the active force that it spawned serious retention and recruiting problems. Retention is low among pilots

¹³⁷ Carter and Perry, 189.

and crew chiefs, particularly among fighter units. The Air Force sought relief through increased tasking of the reserve component in support of contingency operations, but the increased workload on the reserve component spawned its own retention and recruiting problems. The reserve component is now facing retention and recruiting problems similar to the active duty, but active duty retention is the heart of the issue. Modifying and improving active duty retention as recommended will reduce the dependency on the reserves and have significant positive impacts on reserve retention as well as active duty retention. The solutions begin with making active duty more attractive to pilots relative to reserve duty. The Air Force must explore methods of reducing the number of remote tours to Korea. As a minimum, the Air Force should take immediate steps to make Korea a tax-exempt combat zone similar to Saudi Arabia. The bottom line is as Secretary Perry said: “take care of the troops and they will take care of you.”

The reserve component as it was designed and as it is currently manned is the fighter force is suited for limited use, more specifically for use in times of national crises. The serious retention and recruiting problems of the reserve component jeopardizes the national reserve should a war develop.

Significant national public debate about the use of military force in interventions has not materialized and is therefore not an overriding reason to continue the current level of tasking for the reserve component.

The most surprising finding of this research that the actual cost of utilizing reserve component fighter squadrons for contingency operations is actually significantly higher than the cost of active duty fighters.

These findings verify that change is necessary. Securing public debate on the issue of intervention is not an overriding reason to maintain the current force structure and cost considerations indicate that during a period of peacetime contingency operations, fighter forces in the reserves should be reduced to near 20 percent of the total combined fighter force. Therefore, the current structure and level of employment of the reserve component are not in the best long-term interests of the United States and should be changed per the recommendations in this paper. These recommendations will assist the Air Force in countering a dangerous trend – that of poor retention and recruiting in both the active duty and reserve components. Those trends must be reversed if the Air Force is to fulfill its mission.

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